



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Glacier National Park
International Peace Park
Biosphere Reserve
World Heritage Site

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Glacier National Park News Release

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Local Area Women Injured by Grizzly Bear Near Piegan Pass Trail

Women Hike Out to Many Glacier Ranger Station for Assistance


WEST GLACIER, MONT. -- On the afternoon of Saturday, September 27, Kathryn Hiestand, 48, of Bozeman and Kelsy Running Wolf, 20, of Browning, were hiking off trail when they encountered a grizzly bear. They were hiking on a game trail above the Piegan Pass Trail near the northwest face of Cataract Mountain in the Many Glacier area.

According to their account given to investigating park rangers, as they were hiking, the women heard a woof, followed by what sounded like teeth gnashing. Hiestand unsnapped her bear spray and had it in hand when she was hit from behind by the bear and pushed into a sub alpine fir tree. The bear then attacked Running Wolf, pulling her to the ground and biting her on the shoulder. When the bear turned to Running Wolf, Hiestand discharged her can of bear spray at the bear and Running Wolf while she was attempting to play dead. As soon as Hiestand sprayed the bear, it immediately left the area. They reported the entire attack lasted approximately ten seconds.

Both sustained puncture wounds, scratches, bruises and contusions. Ms. Hiestand also sustained a strained/sprained ankle. In spite of their injuries, Hiestand and Running Wolf were able to hike out, unassisted, approximately six miles to the Many Glacier Ranger Station where a ranger-medical treated their injuries. They were then transported to Browning Hospital via the Babb ambulance. They were treated and released later that evening.

Both women are experienced hikers. They indicated that they were following the bear precautions recommended by the National Park Service at Glacier National Park. Hiestand and Running Wolf stated that they might have inadvertently woken the bear, even though they had been taking appropriate precautions. They told park rangers that they were talking to each other when the bear came at them. Park managers feel the attack was consistent with a defensive response on the part of the bear, rather than a predatory attack and no wildlife management actions are planned.

Park rangers have posted the Piegan Pass trail for bear frequenting, and closed the north side of Piegan Pass to the junction with the Grinnell Lake trail to off-trail hiking.



Park managers stress that hikers who carry pepper spray should be knowledgeable about its use, and have it readily available and not stowed away in a pack. Bear spray is meant to be used in the case of imminent attacks only and is not intended to be used as a repellent and should never be sprayed on gear (hiking and/or camping equipment) or around campsites. Under no circumstances should pepper spray create a sense of false security or serve as a substitute for standard safety precautions in bear country.

Park hikers and campers are urged to familiarize with standard safety precautions to follow when hiking and/or camping in bear country. These precautions include 1) never hike alone, 2) never hike after dark, 3) make (loud) noise when hiking (especially near streams, brushy areas, hilltops, and blind curves), 4) keep children close by, and 5) most importantly, always be aware of local surroundings and keep observant and alert for evidence/signs of bears and/or bear activity.

No other bear encounters with injuries have been reported this season. One incident occurred last year when two backcountry campers were injured by a grizzly bear near Snyder Lake on June 29, 2002.

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